

Mogadishu, September 1, 2013 – The Iftiin Foundation, in partnership with the US Department of State and the Tony Elumelu Foundation, held the first Generation Change Summit in Somalia's capital, Mogadishu that brought together ninety youth activists and entrepreneurs to discuss the role of youth in changing a post-conflict society for the better. A global initiative launched by Hillary Clinton in 2010, Generation Change empowers youth to inspire development and create economic opportunities for the youth across around the world.

At a packed conference hall in Jazeera Palace Hotel, Mohamed Ali, Director of Iftiin Foundation, expressed his appreciation for the large youth turnout to the event who welcomed the Generation Change initiative to take root in Somalia. "Our goal today is to inspire young leaders to move from success to significance, to further build their leadership capacity and to create a network of like-minded people who are driven beyond their own personal success to achieve global success" said Ali.

Ali added, "All of you that are here today are the hope of Somalia's future – and you certainly have what it takes to transform Somalia."

With entrepreneurship as the theme of this year, the event attracted youth leaders, former government officials, private sectors and local organizations who vowed to support youth to achieve their goals. The youth led in both the panel and group discussions to present new ideas and solutions to common challenges faced by Somali youth using entrepreneurship as a tool. US Department of State Special Representative to Muslim Communities Farah Pandith, in comments delivered by video, said to participants "We trust that given the right tools, strategies and connections to like minded young leaders around the world, you will be able to conceptualize, develop and implement projects that will bring a bright future to Somalia," said Farah Pandith.

Wiebe Boer CEO of the Tony Elumelu Foundation, a partner with the State Department in sponsoring the Mogadishu summit said "The African story is changing, and nowhere is this more the case than with the steady march to peace in Somalia. As a pan-African foundation focused on entrepreneurship driven economic development the Tony Elumelu Foundation is supporting the Iftiin Foundation's work with Somali entrepreneurs because of our belief that long term peace and economic growth can best be achieved through value creating business growth and job creation."

The purpose of the summit and the accompanying workshops was to inspire youth in Mogadishu to change their country through social entrepreneurship. By the end of the summit participants identified challenges they saw in Mogadishu, linked them with their passions, which ranged from maternal health to SME promotion, and generated business ideas and a first enterprise prototype which allowed them to solve their user needs.

The summit ended with a commitment to connecting youth in Mogadishu with partners, support and expertise necessary to make their ideas for transforming their city a reality.